

G. (M. L.)



HEREDITY.

If every parent of to-day would study and profit by the revelation of heredity, the next generation would present humanity transformed and almost glorified. Why should such truths not be openly treated? Why must coarse jest, and sly hint, and curious and voluptuous thought run riot over a certain class of subjects, in themselves pure, while honest truth is covered with shame and mystery, or banished to dark corners? It is due to the almost total ignorance of men and women as to the laws of being that the flood-tide of sin and misery, known to every physician, has poured over the race. It is due to the wicked deceptions practiced upon the curious minds of children that the baleful power of half-truth and utter vulgarity takes such hold upon our youth.

Are children mysterious? Do you marvel that some good people should have such bad children, or that some indifferent people should have good children? Do you wonder at the weak mind, the diseased or delicate body, the melancholy or malicious or licentious trait, the love of drink, or the obstinate predilection for a certain pursuit? Let me quote one incident and leave the rest to the earnest thought of Christian women:

A certain rough, uncouth family had in it one daughter, who was a striking contrast to the rest—pretty, gentle, refined, book-loving. Mrs. Kirby inquired very closely into the reason of this contrast. The old mother knew of none. In the months before this daughter came they were living down South in a rude cabin. She could

recall no refining or cheering circumstances, except that a peddler had called with a pack of books. The poor mother saw one pretty volume in green and gold which attracted her admiration. It was Scott's "Lady of the Lake." A keen desire for it possessed her, but the dollar was too much to spend. However, such was her longing for it the rest of the day and night that she rose from her bed, walked four miles to the village, roused the peddler, bought the book, and came home happy as a child. Through all that summer she read and committed to memory the beautiful, musical tale. It appeared to her she was with those people by the lakes in the mountains. She saw "Ellen" stepping about so sweetly in the rhyme ; it seemed to her it was all true, especially after she could repeat it to herself. This was the explanation. The babe came to this world bearing on its delicate brain, and even on its little face the impression of the beautiful images which had filled the mother's thoughts.

We could multiply instances of peculiar development of mind and body, of musical or other special talent, of sweetness or strength or piety of disposition in the children, resulting directly from the *temporary* efforts of the mother to direct her mind in these channels. And the opposites of these result with equally startling certainty from her moods and impressions.

The great problem of the church is how to reach and save those who are held in chains to some over-mastering appetite of sin, and those whose deliberate free-will seems to elect for evil. O, mothers, and, secondarily, fathers, you hold the keys of these eternal issues ! You can bequeath a disposition of a free-will that will turn to God and righteousness as the needle to the pole.

"To fashion an infinite soul and send it forth on an

infinite career—infinite susceptibilities laid open to the touch of infinite sorrow—oh ! to him who has ever faced the facts of being—not death, not death, but this irrevocable gift of life is the one solemnity, the awful sacrament!"

A mother may mould the plastic atom of life into a saint or poet, or at least, into a strong and good human being; but she must prepare for it as an artist studies for a picture or an athlete trains for the race. In this pure temple must come no tread of fiery-footed passion. While the vital clay lies under her moulding hand she must be pure as a vestal and free as Diana. She must keep sweet and calm, and drink in strength from the blessed air and sunshine; she must have a reasonable degree of health and happiness, a good mind and a devoted soul; she must be enlightened as to the laws of health and being, and she must yield herself to the influences of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration itself acknowledges these principles; see Judges, xiii: 4, and Matthew, i: 25.

Parentage must be lifted out of the depths of chance and animalism into the region of wise, calm, pure thought and election. In this realm the mother must be a free woman and a crowned queen; and the father must himself be pure from physical and spiritual taint. An ignoble progeny is the sequence of an enslaved motherhood. From a motherhood crippled, tortured, exhausted, oppressed, debased, can come nothing unworthy the likeness of God.

Oh ! for a pen of fire to set before men the record of the agony and the defilement they have for centuries of ignorant selfishness poured out upon womanhood and childhood ! They would fall sick and blinded in the dust, and writhe there for very misery of remorse. Even

many good men in their not excusable blindness are verily guilty in this matter. When shall the healing branch be cast into this black and bitter fountain that is poisoning so many lives?

Jean Ingelow, in her poem of "Margaret by the Mere Side," tells, in her own sweet, dreamy fashion, the story of a fair girl—a woman in years, but dumb and always to be a child in intellect—who sat hour by hour, and day by day, "on the grey stone beneath the sycamore," innocent, wistful, sad, always waiting, always gazing down the mere. Her mother had come there a six-months' bride, to see her husband's boat go down the stream never to return.

"And she with weeping sore
Peered in the water-flags unceasingly.
* * * * *

And, after, desolate she sat alone,
And mourned, refusing to be comforted,
On the grey stone—the moss-embroidered stone;
Till, when the days grew short, a child was born
To the dead father underneath the wave."

A child whose dumb, pensive soul was, by the subtle sympathy of nature, to be stamped for life with a grief she never knew.

Look at another picture from Miss Philp's "Silent Partner," a scene in the pinched, worn, driven life of New England factory girls. Catty—poor, deaf, dumb, repulsive Catty—had fallen asleep. "Her long fingers moved a little, framing broken words. Even in her dreams, she listened for what she never heard, and spoke that which no one understood.

"'Mother used to say,' said Sip, under her breath, 'that it was the noise.'

"'The noise?'

"'The noise of the wheels. She said they beat about

in her head. She came home o' nights and says to herself, "The baby 'll never hear in this world, unless she hear the wheels," and, sure enough, Sip lifted her face to Perley's with a look of awe, 'it is true enough, that Catty hears the wheels, but never anything beside.'"

Cowan and Mrs. Duffey, and Joseph Cook, in his good, brave way, will tell us of scores of wonders like this, but let us take just one scene from Mrs. Kirby's "Transmission:"

We see a young wife stung and tortured by the daily desertion and faithlessness of her husband. We see her patiently, bravely, resolutely, turning away from the sight and feeling of this torment. We see her—and we think she must have asked Heaven's help—constantly and firmly putting aside and treading down every burning thought, every vengeful feeling. She did this not for herself, but for the sake of the innocent soul which she knew would reflect her own. She had her reward in one who grew up before her—pure, sweet, strong, and calm. She had lifted him above dark and petty things into the bright, free atmosphere of great souls.

When will the awful significance of these things dawn upon men and women? When shall the ideal mother come to her high vocation, carefully and reverently, as an artist comes to his marbles, clothed with strength, dowered with wisdom, and baptized with purity and love? When shall she be upheld and comforted by a husband as pure, as reverent as herself?

Do we see all the meaning of Miss Philp's ideal marriage? "With her he is a crowned creature; with him she is a free one." Husband of to-day, do you not see that so soon as you enslave this free creature your own royalty and that of your children is gone? So sure as you bind her down upon the altar of your own lower

nature there shall creep forth, out of the ashes of sacrificed womanhood, a swarm of evil creatures—shapes of hate and pain and lust—that shall look at you and reproach you, out of the eyes of your children.

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